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ABSTRACT

The most striking characteristic of the human service system in Montgomery County, Ohio, is the size and scope of its job center. The center occupies 5.5 acres of office space, has ample parking, is well served by the public transportation system, and is the locus of many human service and employment programs and service providers. The county's strategy is to boost the local workforce's earnings, enhance local employers' competitiveness, and increase the region's economic prosperity. In addition to the economic benefits of the county's integrated service delivery approach, locating all human services in a single location reduces the stigma associated with welfare programs because all residents in need of services go to the same location. Other initiatives that have contributed to the success of the county's efforts to change the face of welfare through integrated service delivery are as follows: (1) community collaboratives (a community-based collaborative program that complements the programs and services available at the job center by providing neighborhood-based supportive services); (2) changing client processes through the development of integrated service teams; (3) a shared philosophy emphasizing a positive, proactive approach to interactions between staff and clients; and (4) a single county agency responsible for multiple programs. (A list of the Montgomery County's job center agencies and its programs is attached.) (MN)

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# Human Services in Montgomery County, Ohio - Service Integration Writ Large

## Report by the Rockefeller Institute of Government

## for the Casey Strategic Consulting Group

**Mark Ragan – 11/20/2002**

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**Summary**

The most striking characteristic of the human service system in Montgomery County, Ohio is the size and scope of the Job Center. Located in a building that was previously a furniture warehouse in Dayton, the county seat, the Job Center has five and one-half acres of office space under one roof. With ample parking and well served by the public transportation system, the Job Center is the locus of many human service programs, employment programs, and service providers.

The county's strategy is to boost the earnings potential of the local workforce, enhance the competitiveness of local employers, and increase the economic prosperity of the region. The Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services (MCDJFS) and other partners use income supports, employment and training programs, and related services as means to achieve these goals. The dual emphases -- serving job seekers *and* employers -- reinforce the value of the Job Center to the community.

In addition to the economic benefits of the county's approach, locating all human services, including income support programs, employment services, and other employment supports, in a single location reduces the stigma associated with welfare programs. All residents in need of services go to the same location. There are no distinctions.

But there is much more to the county's approach to service integration than a huge building where services are co-located. A number of other initiatives have contributed to the success of the county's efforts to change the face of welfare.

*Community collaboratives* – MCDJFS has been instrumental in developing the Targeted Community Based Collaborative program, which complement the programs and services available at the Job Center by providing neighborhood-based supportive services.

*Changing client processes* – When MCDJFS moved into the Job Center, a major change in client processes, Integrated Service Teams, was implemented. These teams, which include county staff and contracted caseworkers, address multiple client needs, with a focus on employment and related supports.

*A shared philosophy* – The "FISH" philosophy is the Center's approach to customer service, as well as staff relationships. It emphasizes a positive, pro-active approach to interactions between staff and clients.

*A single county agency responsible for multiple programs* – MCDJFS is responsible for a wide range of income support programs as well as administration at the local level of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds. One result is the integration of TANF and WIA funds, which support a wide range of job readiness and employment supports programs, including services provided by the community collaboratives.

# Human Services in Montgomery County, Ohio - Service Integration Writ Large

***Background***

## Introduction

This paper is the eighth in a series of reports that describe efforts to integrate the delivery of human service programs in different locations around the country. Funded by the Casey Strategic Consulting Group, the project is designed to document lessons learned, analyze critical success factors, and describe the operational processes and tools, including information technologies, that have contributed to these efforts.

In June 2002 staff from the Rockefeller Institute of Government conducted a site visit to the Job Center, the location of human service programs in Montgomery County, Ohio. The purpose of the site visit was to assess the extent of service integration in the county and gather sufficient information to describe local efforts. Because the site visit focused on only one county, conclusions regarding the status of service integration should not be projected to the rest of the state.

## The Human Services System in Ohio

In Ohio, income support and child welfare programs are administered by counties. Some employment-related programs are administered locally, with variation in the entity responsible for administration; other related programs, such as unemployment benefits, are administered by the state. Recent federal and state legislation provided the impetus for consolidation of locally administered employment-related programs. The Montgomery County Division of Job and Family Services (MCDJFS) is responsible for a wide range of programs, including Ohio Works First (Ohio's TANF program), Food Stamps, Medicaid, Child Care, and Child Support Enforcement. MCDJFS is also responsible for Workforce Investment Act operations in the county. Child welfare programs are also a county responsibility, though those programs are located in a separate office.

## Site Demographics

Montgomery County is located in southwestern Ohio, about an hour north of Cincinnati. County population in 2000 was 559,062. Dayton is the largest city in the county, with a population of approximately 170,000. The percentages of persons and children below the poverty line (11.1% and 16.7%, respectively) are approximately the same as statewide

percentages.[1] Unemployment in May of 2002 was 5.4%, slightly below the Ohio average of 5.8%. [2]

Employment in the county has historically been in the manufacturing sector, but over the last few decades, the number of manufacturing jobs has declined. Currently, the fastest growing employment sector is the services industry. This shift from manufacturing to services created the need for a better-educated workforce. In response, the county, working with other community organizations, created the Job Center.

### *Efforts to Integrate Human Services in Montgomery County*

Planning for the Job Center began in the mid-1990s. Fred Smith, who was at one time the CEO of Huffy Corporation, and who had been involved in local human service issues, is credited with motivating local leaders to develop a more integrated approach to the delivery of human services. In 1995, the County Board of Commissioners created a task force, the Job Center Work Group, which included the United Way, the City of Dayton, Montgomery County, and the Chamber of Commerce. The Work Group developed a "no wrong door" approach with the goal of reducing dependence on public assistance. Key to the plan was the creation of the Montgomery County Job Center.

The mission of the Job Center is simple and straightforward: "Investing in people, fulfilling employer needs, and improving the quality of life in Montgomery County."[3]

## The Job Center

### The Facility

The Montgomery County Job Center opened in 1997. It is located in what had been an eight and one-half acre warehouse near the central business district of Dayton Multiple government and private agencies and service providers currently utilize five and one-half acres of the building, with the other three acres available for expansion. The building has large areas where workers sit in cubicles as well as fully enclosed offices. One part of the building where many of the service providers are located has large hallways, much like a shopping mall. These hallways are used for job fairs that the Center sponsors twice yearly. In 2001, more than 100 employers participated in each of the job fairs.

The county's vision, in which the Job Center plays a key role in the economic growth of the region, emphasizes workforce development and services for employers. As a consequence, the majority of programs and services at the Job Center focus on employment and training and connecting job seekers with employers. Income support programs and employment supports to assist job seekers are readily available. In the Job

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[1] Statistics from U. S. Census Quickfacts at http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/.

[2] From U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment data at http://www.bls.gov/lau/.

[3] *Putting People and Jobs Together: Our Annual Report to the People of Montgomery County*, 2001 by The Job Center, Dayton, Ohio, p. 4.

Center's 2001 Annual Report, these are termed "get-ready-for-the-workplace" services. In 2001, the number of client visits to the Center exceeded 30,000 per month.

**The Job Center – Dayton, Ohio**

When clients enter the building, they do not congregate in a reception area. They are directed to the appropriate location in the building by a simple, yet effective system. The receptionist quickly determines the type of program or service that the client is interested in and gives the client a colored card. Small flags that hang from the corridor ceilings then direct the client to the right location in the building. Considering the number of clients who come through the front door, there are no waiting lines. Clients quickly move to the proper location. There are small reception areas for some of the on-site programs, such as income support programs and job services. Conference rooms are located throughout the building for use by all of the Job Center's partner agencies. A drop-in child care center for clients is located on-site.

**One Stop for Programs and Services**

One stop really means one stop in Montgomery County. With few exceptions, county residents can access a broad range of human services programs and services at a single site. There are 47 partner agencies at the Job Center that provide government-administered programs and privately-administered services. (See attachment 1.) MCDJFS is the single largest partner in the Job Center.

Including such a broad range of programs at a single location has a number of positive consequences. Because so many services are co-located, it is easy for clients to determine where in the county they should go for services, and because all services are

on-site, accessing multiple services is simplified. In addition, because the emphasis is on employment, clients and the larger community see the Job Center as just that, rather than as a welfare office.

**Governance**

In July 2000, the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners established the Workforce Policy Board (WPB), which oversees Job Center operations and other county human service initiatives. The WPB includes public and private sector representatives who serve on one or more of four councils:

- The Employers' Council, which is responsible for determining the workforce needs of area employers;
- The Youth Council, which provides input into design and operation of county youth programs;
- The Adult Education and Training Council, which provides input into the design and operation of adult programs, and;
- The Job Center Partners' Council, which sets policy and oversees the performance of the Job Center.

Organizations located in the Job Center sign a Memorandum of Understanding that is reviewed and approved by the Job Center Partners' Council. The county employs a Center Director, who reports to the Board of Commissioners and the WPB, and is responsible for facilitating cooperation and coordination between Center partners.

The Workforce Policy Board and the four governance councils establish target outcomes and related goals for the Center; performance is tracked and measured against these targets. Examples of goals include increasing the number of employers utilizing center resources, client awareness of the Center, and meeting customer needs.

**Other Efforts to Integrate Services**

In addition to the creation of the Job Center, MCDJFS has undertaken a number of other initiatives intended to improve the delivery of services.

**Organizational and Culture Change**

Around the time that the Job Center opened, county human services offices went through a management streaming and restructuring process that saw overall staffing levels drop from more than 600 staff to the current level of approximately 400 staff. The county also created a team structure for client intake and case management, described below.

MCDJFS managers and staff have adopted what they call the "FISH Philosophy"[4] that affects both interactions with clients as well as interactions within the Department. The four underlying principles of this philosophy are:[5]

1. Choose your attitude: Each of us has a choice every day of our lives to choose to be happy and positive, or sad and negative. We choose to be happy.

2. Play: This is the idea that no matter what your job is or where you are, you can have fun. We are finding ways to have fun at work.

3. Be there: We need to be there for each other as well as our customers. The key to success is the support we give each other and give to our customers.

4. Make their day: To take time out to speak a kind word, give some praise, do a little something for someone else. All of us can make a huge impact on others if we just take the time to make someone's day.

**Integrated Service Teams**

Before moving to the Job Center, eligibility processes, case management, and employment-related functions were handled separately. In 1997, the county combined eligibility and work activity functions within a single job description, the Job and Family Service Specialist (JFSS) and contracted with Goodwill Industries for case managers. These staff, as well as support and supervisory staff, work together in Integrated Service Teams (IST). County staff are responsible for intake and ongoing eligibility processes as well as ensuring that clients move to self-sufficiency through employment. The case managers from Goodwill serve as links to support services, such as drug and alcohol treatment. This arrangement allows county staff to focus on eligibility and employment-related issues, and facilitates determining other needs that may exist because clients are more likely to provide better information to non-governmental case managers.

**Client Intake and Assessment**

When clients indicate the need for cash assistance or other income supports to the receptionist, they are referred to a unit aide for a brief screening interview where demographic information and an "intent to file" document are secured. Clients are then shown a videotape that describes rights and responsibilities and are referred to one of the IST units. An assessment of the client and family situation is completed, focusing on barriers to employment. For services not provided directly by the county, clients are referred to the appropriate agency, usually a walk down the hall in the Job Center.

**Integration of Funding Streams**

[4] The FISH philosophy is a customer service approach based on the work style of fishmongers at the Pike Street Market in Seattle.
[5] From materials provided by the Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services.

The county has integrated funding from the TANF program with Workforce Investment Act funds. Combined funds are used for a wide range of services, including employment readiness and skills training, as well as supportive services. Funding also supports Targeted Community Based Collaboratives.

**Targeted Community Based Collaboratives**

Although a wide range of programs and services are available at the Job Center, MCDJFS has developed a network of faith-based, school-based, and community-based organizations that operate in neighborhoods in and around Dayton and provide services that support the agency's objectives. With the possibility of many families facing termination of assistance due to the 36-month TANF time limit in Ohio, the county determined that a new strategy was needed.

The result was the development of relationships with Targeted Community Based Collaboratives (TCBC) now provide "hard to serve" families with a range of supportive services, including:

- Family planning services
- Referral services for substance abuse and family violence
- Family crisis intervention
- Job search and placement assistance referrals
- Education and training referrals
- Family life education
- Truancy intervention and counseling
- Juvenile justice intervention
- Youth and adult mentoring programs
- Community education and community service networking
- Tutorial and academic coaching

The TCBC target population is families with gross monthly income less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG) living in neighborhoods with median family incomes less 200% of the FPG, or where the unemployment rate is significantly higher than the county average. There are now more than 30 such collaboratives throughout Montgomery County.

TCBC was recently honored by the National Association of Counties with an achievement award "in recognition of an innovative program which contributes to and enhances county government in the United States."

**Information system for sharing information across programs** – The county is developing an information system to increase communication across human service programs and improve access to information. Called AgencyLink, the system will include case management and client tracking functions, a resource directory, a family violence prevention module, and communication and scheduling software. Agencies will have access to demographic and case information.

### *Critical Success Factors*

Statistics indicate that the county's efforts are making a difference. Entry-level wages of clients who have received services from the Job Center are higher than in other parts of the state. The TANF caseload was reduced by nearly 60% between 1992 and 2000. (As is the case in most of the country, caseloads have increased slightly over the last two years.) Customer satisfactions surveys show that a large majority of clients and employers are pleased with the services that they receive.

A number of factors contribute to the success of the Job Center and the county's efforts to integrate services:

*A Single Location for Multiple Services and Programs* – MCDJFS managers suggest that the county's implementation of the one-stop concept has greatly improved coordination and integration of services. Formal and informal communication between service providers and program staff has improved, resulting in better services for clients. Because so many employment-related programs and services are available at the Job Center, including all state and county programs as well as a wide range of privately-provided services, community residents see the Job Center not as a welfare office, but as an employment office.

*Making the Job Center a Resource for Employers* – The design and operation of the Job Center focus not only on job seekers, but also on providing services to employers. This involves providing re-employment services when an employer reduces staff and services for employers seeking employees. Job Center staff use the services and reputation of the Job Center as an enticement to companies considering locating in the Dayton area. Providing services that facilitate the development of a viable workforce is a major factor in the economic health of the community.

*One agency responsible for multiple programs* – MCDJFS is responsible for administration of income support programs, including TANF, child care, Medicaid and Food Stamps, child support enforcement, and WIA. Combining all of these programs in a single organization enhances coordination and facilitates integration of services to clients. One example is combining funding from TANF and WIA, which has helped MCDJFS provide employment support, including services provided by the Targeted Community Based Collaboratives.

*Local control and resources* – Local administration of these programs, an infusion of county funds, and the new flexibility inherent in TANF and other funding streams give managers a great deal of control over the methods and processes for delivering services. In Montgomery County, this level of local control, coupled with other factors, has motivated MCDJFS and partners managers to build a system that serves local needs.

*Strong Leadership and Open Communication* – A factor cited by managers at the Job Center as critical to its success is strong leadership at the program level as well as

ongoing support and involvement of political leaders. Strong connections between the business community, political leaders, agency directors, the education community, and local foundations facilitated development of the Center. County commissioners, while conservative, have been willing to take risks, invest county funds in the development of the Center, and continue to be involved in the Center's evolution. Communication between operational managers and political leaders is open and direct – the Center Director reports directly to the Board of County Commissioners.

### *Lessons Learned*

Over the last decade, managers of human services programs in Montgomery County have made significant progress in reworking local service delivery systems and processes. Their insights provide useful lessons regarding service integration and changing the focus of their programs.

*The importance of cross-training* – In order to facilitate blending public and private staff into teams, and to ensure that all of the service providers at the Center are aware of the range of available services, continual cross-training is needed. Managers suggested that this issue should have been addressed more completely in developing the Center. Because so many programs are located at the Center, it is difficult for staff to maintain awareness of all of them, particularly regarding programs that they do not interact with on a regular basis. To overcome this problem, regular training is needed.

*Don't over-promise, and deliver on the promises that you make* – Managers were conservative in the estimates of the potential benefits of the Job Center, related both to improvements for clients and employers. As one manager stated, "It is better to surprise than to disappoint." They are careful to deliver on promises, particularly to employers. The fact is that employers choose to go to the Job Center for services; clients have only the Job Center. The concern is that if an employer is disappointed, the company may not come back when services are needed in the future. This is a double loss, because not only does the employer stop using the Center's services, the Center also loses the possibility of developing jobs that would benefit clients.

*Collaboration within the community* – The system of Targeted Community Based Collaboratives, funded in part with TANF and WIA funds, helps ensure that clients who might otherwise not seek services at the Job Center are connected to a system of supports. Culturally-sensitive neighborhood and school-based services complement programs and services available at the Center.

### *Conclusion*

The number of agencies and programs that are co-located in the Job Center, the sheer size of the building, and the number of clients who walk through the front door suggest that services may be impersonal. This is far from the case. MCDJFS and partner agencies

have created a system and a philosophy that works for clients, and for employers as well. In addition to creating the Job Center, managers of Montgomery County's human service programs have taken steps to improve the economic health of the community and increase opportunities for clients. The results reinforce their approach.

Managers and staff are proud of the changes, with good reason. They have avoided the potential negative effects of the large scale of the facility by implementing processes that complement the one-stop approach. The Job Center is impressive in its conception and its implementation.

**Attachment - Job Center Agencies and Programs**[6]

| ORGANIZATIONS | SERVICES |
|---|---|
| Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services | Provides access to Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Assessment and treatment |
| Barry Staffing | Specializes in light industrial employment |
| Brighter Futures | Provides nurse home visitation services to young pregnant and parenting women. |
| CBS Personnel Services | Provides specialized services in permanent, long term, and temporary positions as well as employee leasing |
| Center for Non-Profit Resources of Ohio, Inc. | Provides guidance to non-profits in delivering various services, programs, and presentations to the community. |
| Clothes That Work | Promotes economic self-sufficiency by providing donated, professional business attire for employable women |
| Concera Corporation | Provides strategies in job seeking, interviewing & job finding techniques |
| Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority | Processes applications or subsidized housing and other DMHA services |
| Dayton Public Schools/ABLE | Provides information for obtaining a high school diploma or GED |
| Eastco Employment Resource Network | Provides employment services for persons with disabilities in the areas of job placement and training and benefits consultation |
| Excel Communications | Provides employment in the communication industry |
| Goodwill Industries | Provides outreach activities and placement for persons with disabilities as well as case management for employment services |
| Home Builders Association Training & Career Office | Provides training and career information in home building industry. |
| Job Bank | Provides resources to employers for recruiting, interviewing and resume and employment-seeking services to job seekers |
| Job Corps | Provides GED, vocational, educational, & social education to youth 16-24 years of age |
| Learning Links | Provides information & referral for reading, math, and GED classes |
| Lutheran Social Services | Provides the Learn-to-Earn Program, Credit Counseling/Debt Management Program, & Housing Counseling & Education |
| Miami Valley Career Technology | Provides development of attitudes, self-worth and self-esteem, basic assessment, basis skills plus, training to employ customers in the hospitality industry, pharmacies, LPN classes, and professional cook positions |

[6] From The Job Center website at http://www.thejobcenter.org/JobCenterOrganizations.htm.

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| Miami Valley Child Development Center, Inc. (Kid Connection) | Provides time-limited child care services for children of caretakers while conducting business at the Job Center |
| Miami Valley Medical School | Provides on-site Nurse Aide and LPN Certification Program and information about internships, diplomas, associate degrees and certificates |
| Montgomery County Board of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities | Information & referral linkage to disability goods and services |
| Montgomery County Children Services | Promotes prevention of abuses, neglect, or exploitation of children |
| Montgomery County Combined Health District | Provides an immunization clinic and the WIC Program |
| Montgomery County Educational Services | Provides self-sufficiency training classes. |
| Montgomery County Job and Family Services | Provides Employment, OWF (TANF) Program, Title XX, Medicaid, Food Stamps, PRC and WIA Program |
| Montgomery County Mentoring Collaborative | Provides a resource center for children, mentors and mentoring Agencies within Montgomery County |
| Ohio Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired | Provides catering and food services at the center and board meetings |
| Ohio Department of Job and Family Services | Access unemployment services and Labor Market information. |
| Ohio Department of Youth Services | Provides patrol services for Juveniles 13-18 years of age. |
| Recycled Equipment Donated for Independence | Provides rehab/recycled medical equipment. |
| Senior Resource Connection | Provides employment for persons 50 and over |
| Sentry Security, Incorporated | Provides security of the Job Center as well as private security and investigations |
| Sinclair Community College | Provides office skills training and workforce development training; basic computer training & workforce behavior training |
| Sinclair Fast Forward | Provides out of school Youth program to assist individuals with obtaining an GED to become self sufficient. |
| St. Vincent DePaul Offices | Office for the landlord of the Job Center |
| Supporting Council of Preventive Effort (SCOPE) | Processes applications / authorizations for the HEAP, FEMA and Adult Emergency Assistance Programs |
| Technology Resource Center | Provides vision services and adaptive equipment for persons with disabilities. |
| Womanline | Provides counseling, infant supplies, & special programming for |

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| | women |
| Workplace ReConnections | Provides referrals for support assistance in locating employment opportunities |
| Youth Connections | Alternative education choices for out of school youths. |

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